

DESERT QUEEN RANCH, NORTH HOUSE
(Teacher's House) (Lake Cabin)
Joshua Tree National Monument
Twentynine Palms Vic.
San Bernardino County
California

HABS NO. CA-2347-E

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CAL
36-TNPALV,
1E-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Building Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

DESERT QUEEN RANCH--NORTH HOUSE

(Teacher's House, Lake Cabin)
(William F. Keys Ranch--North House)

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Location: Joshua Tree National Monument, Twentynine Palms vicinity, San Bernardino County, California.

Present owner: National Park Service; Joshua Tree National Monument.

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Restoration of site; occasional summer tours.

Significance: The Keys Desert Queen Ranch in the Joshua Tree National Monument is an outstanding historical site of desert-based vernacular technologies displaying a range of architectural and engineering artifacts associated with the Euro-American era of settlement in the Mojave desert. The site is largely intact with nine buildings and four ore mills surviving. Built for guests, the North House became the home of numerous teachers who taught at Keys Ranch.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** 1919-20.
2. **Original and subsequent owners:** William Keys.
3. **Builders, suppliers:** William Keys.
4. **Original plans and construction:** The building was constructed of scavenged materials.

B. Historical Information

For more information on the Desert Queen Ranch, see HABS No. CA-2347.

The North House was occupied by various teachers who taught at the ranch, and also served as the schoolhouse until the South House was built. William Keys paid half the salary of some of the teachers and furnished the house for them to live in, while the county furnished books and supplies.

Willis and Phyllis Keys, who were both students here, have different recollections of the teachers--none of whom stayed for more than a year or two. The first teacher at the ranch

DESERT QUEEN RANCH--NORTH HOUSE
HABS No. CA-2347-E (Page 2)

that Phyllis Keys remembers is Mrs. Starr.¹ Phyllis started school with Mrs. Marsh in either kindergarten or first grade in about 1937. Mrs. Marsh was succeeded by Miss Carlson, who married a Mr. Perkins. Next were Mr. and Mrs. Howard Dudley, at which time the schooling moved to the South House, where Phyllis attended fifth and sixth grades. Phyllis went to Twentynine Palms for seventh and eighth grades.²

Willis Keys remembers the order of teachers as Carlson/Perkins, Mrs. Dudley, Miss Starr, and Mrs. Marsh. Willis Keys remembers Miss Carlson to be the first paid teacher. Willis, his brother and sister were the only students at the time. Sometimes people who were staying at the ranch would occasionally teach also. Miss Carlson was a qualified teacher who had taught at Ludlow and when she moved to the ranch she taught one full year of grade school. And that was Willis Keys' only year of grammar school--he graduated from all eight grades in one year. When Mrs. Dudley taught, the south school was built and there were neighbor children from Quail Springs and Lost Horse Valley coming in, making a student body of six to seven and as many as nine students at times. Willis thinks Mrs. Marsh was the last teacher to teach at the ranch.³

There were no desks in this cabin. The kitchen had a table which was used by some of the children for studying. The main room had another table and a little two-burner stove. The large Kalamazoo Co. stove outside by the teacher's house was not the stove remembered by Phyllis as being inside. (Willis may have the stove that used to sit in the main room of this cabin.) There were some bookcases in the main room and during later years one of the teachers moved her bed into that room. (Willis remembers this as the teacher keeping her bed in the main room during the winter, and on the porch in the summer.) There is a pipe running north-south through the porch and into the wall of the main room which was used for hanging clothes because there was never a closet in the building. All the windows around the house had awning-type window sections on the outside which had to be lowered down and hooked; they all had glass at one time even though it is missing now. There were two outhouses to the northeast where there is a somewhat deep ravine now. Outside between the kitchen and porch was a court area where the children would play. (Willis remembers that the children used to play baseball in the flat area in front of this cabin during recess time.) By the main room and the porch, at the southwest corner, one of the teachers had a large cactus garden.⁴

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

¹Phyllis Keys Meidell, daughter of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis in Hesperia, CA, August 24-25, 1993, tape 3B.

²Meidell, tape 4A.

³Willis Keys, son of William and Frances Keys, interviewed by Richard Vidutis at Joshua Tree National Monument, July 8-9, 1993, and at North Fork, CA, July 16-18, 1993, tape 3A.

⁴Meidell, tape 6A; Keys, tapes 3A and 3B.

DESERT QUEEN RANCH--NORTH HOUSE
HABS No. CA-2347-E (Page 3)

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character:** Built for guests, the cabin became the house for numerous teachers who taught at Keys Ranch. The main section, the living room, is a typical mining cabin. Shed-roof additions were added to the main structure. All walls are of vertical board and batten of unfinished wood.
2. **Condition of fabric:** Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** 24'-6" by 21'-4"
2. **Foundations:** boulders set with mortar, especially on the north side, which angles towards a washed-out ravine.
3. **Walls:** posts with board (11") and batten (3") all around; vertical boards cover the bottom half of the porch and screens the top half.
4. **Structural system, framing:** Wood frame.
5. **Porches:** Porch enclosed on three sides with screens (upper half) and vertical board (lower half).
6. **Chimneys:** Pipe from oil heating stove anchored to wall and extending through roof.
7. **Openings:**
 - a. **Doorways and doors:** one right-hand paneled door on the east wall facing the meadow area; one right-hand paneled door opening on the north wall; and a doorway (door missing) opening to the south.
 - b. **Windows and shutters:** windows and frames in wall opening along the south and east walls of the kitchen addition are missing. It is possible that these openings may have been covered only by awning-type screen frames which are still on the exterior walls. The window on the north wall west of the desert cooler is fixed. The window to the desert cooler has been replaced by a wood board.
8. **Roof:** Gable roof over the main room, shed roof over the kitchen and porch.

C. Description of Interior:

1. **Floor Plans:** Three rooms.

DESERT QUEEN RANCH--NORTH HOUSE
HABS No. CA-2347-E (Page 4)

2. **Flooring:** Wood board covered with linoleum.
3. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Paper board with vertical and horizontal finish strips, painted pale yellow. Evidence of wallpaper still visible.
4. **Doorways and doors:** one paneled door between the main room and kitchen and one paneled door between the main room and porch.
5. **Hardware:** All doors have rim locksets, two have mortised hinges and one does not. Hinges on the awning screen units over the kitchen windows are exposed to the outside.
6. **Mechanical equipment:**
 - a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** A Kalamazoo Stove Co., Kalamazoo, Mich., stove stands outside southeast porch.
 - b. **Plumbing:** Stone and mortar sink in the kitchen has two pipes protruding through the east wall.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

See Desert Queen Ranch, HABS No. CA-2347.